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ABSTRACT

In an attempt to ascertain the validity of the assumption that Norwegians supported education much more than did German-Russians in North Dakota in the early part of the twentieth century, select counties made up predominantly of the ethnic groups in question were examined, using data taken from the years 1910-12, 1922-23, and 1930. The two groups were studied by comparing known aspects of the educational system which might be indicative of differing national attitudes, aspirations, and achievements: the variance in physical plants, teacher and school personnel, school classifications, outside observer assessments, parental support, and student performance. A small school composed of both Germans and Norwegians was analyzed. Reports of more recent educational records were assessed. An historical survey of the background in Russia and Norway prior to emigration was made. Analysis of the varying educational attitudes and achievements of North Dakota's two largest ethnic groups, the Germans from Russia and the Norwegians, indicated that, when seen as a whole, the German-Russians in the counties and schools studied were decidedly less interested, less supportive, and less involved in the state's educational enterprises until after World War II. (Author/CM)

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY: Humanities on the Frontier

EDUCATION AND ETHNICITY:
A STUDY OF GERMAN-RUSSIANS
AND NORWEGIANS IN NORTH DAKOTA

By
Playford V. Thorson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of History
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, North Dakota

William C. Sherman, M.A.
Assistant Professor, Sociology
North Dakota State University
Fargo, North Dakota

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Project Director:
Andrew Gulliford
Colorado Mountain College/Silt Elementary School
Silt, Colorado

Media Director:
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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY: HUMANITIES ON THE FRONTIER

The Mountain Plains Library Association is pleased to be involved in this project documenting the country school experience. Funding of this project from the National Endowment for the Humanities, cost sharing and other contributions enabled us all to work with the several state-based Humanities Committees as well as many other state and local libraries, agencies and interested citizens. We are deeply impressed not only by the enthusiasm for this work by all concerned but by the wealth of experience brought to bear in focusing attention on—and recapturing—this important part of history, and how we got here. This project seems to identify many of the roots and "character formation" of our social, political and economic institutions in the West.

Already the main Project objective seems to be met, stimulating library usage and increasing circulation of historical and humanities materials in this region. Public interest is rising in regional, state and local history. Oral history programs are increasing with greater public participation. The study of genealogy—and the search for this information—is causing much interest in consulting—and preserving—historical materials. What has been started here will not end with this project. The immediate results will tour the entire region and be available for any who wish the program, film, and exhibit. There will be more discussion of—and action on—the issues involving the humanities and public policies, past and present. The Mountain Plains Library Association is proud to be a partner in this work, the Country School Legacy, and its contribution to understanding humanities on the frontier.

Joseph J. Anderson
Nevada State Librarian
Past President
Mountain Plains Library Association

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COMPARATIVE NORTH DAKOTA HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This study will attempt to analyze the varying educational attitudes and achievements of North Dakota's two largest ethnic groups, the Germans from Russia and the Norwegians. The focus will be on the early part of the twentieth century.

Until recently there has been a popular notion, a conventional wisdom, that there existed and perhaps still exists a decided difference between the Norwegian citizens of this state and their German-Russian counterparts in matters of education. Robinson's History of North Dakota quotes a German-Russian educator, Joseph Voeller, who wrote in 1940:

> To this day the shortest terms, the poorest schools, the lowest teachers' salaries, the most inadequate equipment, and the most irregular attendence, are found in German-Russian communities.[1]

In contrast, Leona N. Bergmann in her Americans from Norway says in 1950:

> No state university in the country has so many students of Norwegian stock as the University of Minnesota, which, likewise, has many department heads and deans of Norwegian descent.[2]

Neither Voeller or Bergmann seem to substantiate their claims with definite data. Still the assumption persists; the Norwegians supported education much more than did the German-Russians. This article is to attempt to

ascertain whether there is any validity to the above assumptions.[3]

A QUESTION OF METHOD

Since official reports rarely, if ever, mention national origins in educational matters, at least in a comparative sense, the authors have resorted to another approach. We will look closely at a number of select counties which are made up predominently of the ethnic groups in question. Chosen for the study are the four North Dakota counties which have the highest proportion of German-Russians, and the corresponding four counties which exhibit the highest ratio of Norwegians. The Norwegian counties are Divide, Nelson, Steele, and Traill, the German-Russian are Logan, McIntosh, Mercer and Sheridan. [4]

The data will be taken from the years 1910-12, 1922-23, 1930 for the following reasons:

1. Homesteading was, by and large, completed by these dates.
2. The county lines involved here had achieved their permanent form.
3. The U.S. Census and Superintendent of Schools documents were published at these approximate dates.

In chosing the counties, it must be said that from a socio-economic point of view, all eight counties were still highly rural in nature. The basic type of agriculture, both grain and livestock, was similar. None had large towns of any size nor institutions of higher learning which might affect attitudes towards education. Recognizing that the eastern Norwegian counties were settled somewhat earlier than the more centrally located German-Russian counties, the authors have balanced this factor with Norwegian Divide county, one of the last North Dakota counties to be settled. Finally, we recognize that there were cetain disparities

in population and economic conditions between the German and Norwegian counties. The authors, for the purpose of this study, see the differences as minor, not significant enough to invalidate the results of the investigation.[5]

The U.S. Bureau of Census figures for the years 1910, 1920, and 1930 will be used. The reports of the North Dakota State Superintendent of Schools will be analyzed. Occasional other documents such as college graduation lists, and reports of selected public schools will also be used. Finally, historical literature will be used for assessment purposes.

In general, the authors will attempt to study the two groups by comparing known aspects of the educational system which might be indicative of the differing national attitudes, aspirations and achievements: the variance in physical plants, teacher and school personnel, school classifications, outside observer assessments, parental support, and student performance. An analysis of a small school composed of both Germans and Norwegians will be given in detail. Several small reports of more recent educational records will also be included in the hope of assessing contemporary trends. Since the authors believe the major contribution cause of observed variance is to be found in the groups' prior experience, an historical survey of the background in Russia and Norway prior to emigration will be made.

NORWEGIAN VERSUS GERMAN-RUSSIAN COUNTY COMPARISONS

During the first quarter of our century schools were highly decentralized, procedures were varied and many county educational programs were in their

infancy. (Considerable homesteading continued in Divide, Mercer and Sheridan counties until 1910.) As a result, school reports were often fragmentary. Yet some public documents are available. The first to be analyzed are those which deal with the physical plant — the facilities, buildings, rooms, and conveniences. As will be seen, the German-Russian counties compare unfavorably to the Norwegian.

PHYSICAL PLANT

One index of the acceptance of education in general and of a local educational institution in particular is the type and quality of school which a community builds and supports. An analysis of school reports in 1911 shows that only one "log and sod" school remained in the four Norwegian counties. At the same time, the two reporting German counties, Mercer and McIntosh, had a total of 12, five and seven respectively. [6]

Another indicator of community support is the number of schools which are erected with such niceties as a gymnasium. In 1923, the four German-Russian counties reported a total of eight gymnasiums while the four Norwegian counties reported thrity-two. Divide, the late settlement county, had seven, while McIntosh, settled twenty years earlier, had two. (See Table 2 in Appendix.)

When the condition of the buildings and the various furnishings were considered, a 1922 comparison of categories such as, "bad or no curtains," "poor toilet facilities," "no wash basins or paper towels," and "lack of ventilation systems," the German-Russian counties were deficient, often decidedly so, on every count. In the same year, reports from the eight counties make it very clear that school districts in the predominantly

Norwegian areas, "scrub their schools " significantly more than those in the German-Russian counties. (See Table 2.)

The number of school libraries and the quantity of books in the libraries is by no means an unimportant guide to both the level of support and the quality of education in a county. We find that in 1912, the Norwegian counties had a total of 169 school libraries, while in the same year the German-Russian counties reported only 15. Even more indicative was the number of books in those same school libraries in that year. The Norwegian counties reported 18,547 books, while the four German-Russian counties listed a total of 1,138. Divide county, the late settlement area, reported 782 books in their twenty libraries, more than any single German-Russian county total. [7]

Ten years later (1923) the three German counties which reported (McIntosh, Mercer, and Sheridan) listed a total of 12,154 books, while Divide county alone had 11,082. The three Norwegian counties reporting in that year had a total of slightly more than 44,000 books in their various libraries. [8]

There is, however, evidence in the Superintendent of Schools reports that the German-Russian county school authorities were concerned about their educational deficiencies. In the 1923 category of "sets of encyclopedias in schools," the Norwegian counties had 339 and the German-Russian had 208. But Logan County had more encyclopedias than any Norwegian county except Nelson, and the Traill County total (71) was below the Sheridan County (81) total. On the other hand, the number of schools "not furnishing supplementary readers for the first six grades" show a serious discrepancy between the two groups; 156 schools in the German-Russian counties lack such readers but only five in the Norwegian counties were deficient in this regard. [9]

It also seems clear that school consolidation of some type or another proceeded at a faster rate in Norwegian school areas. Whether such concentration of facilities enhances quality is a matter of discussion even in the present day, but for whatever it may mean, the reports say the following: 240 "one room" schools existed in the Norwegian counties in 1923, while 364 such schools were reported in the German counties of that year. [10]

An Anglo-American school superintendent in German-Russian Logan County, Eva B. Farell, had observed earlier, "It is with much difficulty that the foreign population is convinced of the great necessity of good school houses and good schools, hence building is slow." [11]

A few years earlier, in 1896, a Napoleon School Board official wrote in a Logan County newspaper:

> Let us take a glance at our schoolhouses, or more appropriately, school caves. The greater number are being taught in Russian homes. These houses are what eastern people call caves or outdoor cellars; being built of sod and covered with clay. They are heated with Russian ovens and have no ventilation except the door. I know of a room of this kind in which there is one bed, a lounge, and a table; the family meal is spread three times a day on this table in the school room. No desks, blackboards or maps. True, we have a few good school houses, the best at Napoleon. Outside of Napoleon, we had but three months of school, the teacher receiving not more than $35 per month.[12]

The information given above concerning school facilities and equipment, when taken at face value, seems to indicate that the Norwegian citizens of early North Dakota had clearly a greater commitment to education. The authors have not been selective in their choice of the comparative report categories. They would welcome, however, any other assessment. Perhaps there are additional factors to be considered: bad

roads, varying economic situations, political intrigue, inept public officials, discrepancies in tax structures. Any one of these could affect the quality of the physical plant.

TEACHER SALARIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

A second general index of educational commitment would seem to be a community's insistence on quality teachers. Salary scales and qualification levels should generally indicate teacher standards. People who seriously believe in education will try to find good teachers and pay them well. Contemporary documents indicate that school authorities were interested in quality education as is evidenced by the 1923 report of a County Superintendent of Schools:

> "Many of these (teachers from eastern states) are a disappointment. In one district last year we had persuaded the board to pay 55^{00} and 60^{00}, thinking that thereby we could get better teachers, and there were four failures out of six. They had come to have a good time rather than attend to school work."[13]

The official reports of the times concerning school personnel contain several items which give some basis for assessing local concern for quality. In the matter of salaries, the Norwegian communities paid their teachers at a higher rate than did the German-Russian. In 1910-1, the Norwegian counties which reported (Divide, Nelson, Traill,) had an average monthly payment of $72.60. This compares to $43.70 in the one German-Russian county reporting (Logan). The women in the three Norwegian counties received $54.80 and the German county paid its women teachers correpondingly $41.19.[14]

A decade later, in 1923, the figures were as follows:

Norwegian County Salaries

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill	Average
MEN	$131.87	156.07	157.01	163.56	151.00
WOMEN	110.02	104.40	108.80	113.13	108.00

German-Russian County Salaries

	Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan	Average
MEN	$96.10	89.21	107.12	81.10	93.00
WOMEN	99.42	101.66	106.52	105.98	103.00

Quite clearly, the Norwegian counties paid higher salaries to their teachers in 1923 (an average of $151.00 for men teachers in the Norwegian counties and $93.00 in the German-Russian.) The differences are substantial. Surprisingly, the women teachers in German-Russian counties fared comparatively better than their counterparts in the Norwegian counties. In fact, the women teachers in the German counties received almost the same average salary as the women teachers in the Norwegian schools. Even more, the women teachers in the German-Russian counties received higher salaries than the men in the same school system. ($103.00 for women, and $93.00 for men.)

What were the reasons for this variance? Were women teachers considered more effective in German-Russian areas? Were they more qualified and thus merited higher salary? Did German-Russian parents perceive school teaching as being a female occupation and frowned upon male participation through a disadvantageous salary scale? A superintendent from Logan County gives us some insight into this. After complaining about the low salary increments, he says:

> This is an inconsistency familiar to all who have made a study of the remuneration of the common school teacher, yet on the whole the schools of Logan County are forging ahead and what is most needed is something to awaken the average school official to the fact that he is trying to employ people of education and natural pedagogic ability and in some instances with special training for the profession of teaching for less money than he pays a man to drive his team and to attend to his stock.[15]

In other words, farm labor was preferred to teaching; it paid more.

In terms of county Superintendent salaries in 1911, the four Norwegian counties generally paid more than the German-Russian counties with one interesting exception, Divide County. The three German-Russian counties which reported paid more than twice the salary received by the Superintendent in the Norwegian Divide County.[16]

If the payment of teachers is, as suggested in the various comparisons above, an indication of the degree of local support the German-Russians viewed education in a less favorable light than the Norwegian citizens.

North Dakota teacher qualifications have varied through the years according to the mandates of the State Department of Public Instruction. We can say, however, that the teacher professional requirements were applied in each decade with an even hand throughout the state. It is, therefore, possible to compare the various counties as they procured the services of teachers with different qualifications. Here again, the German counties appear to be second best. Thus, reports show that in 1923 the Norwegian counties in graded rural schools and in the town schools were clearly attracting more college and normal school college graduates than their German-Russian counterparts. (See Table 3.) The reports further show that while in the one room schools of villages and the open countryside, virtually no college graduates were teaching in that year in any of the Norwegian or German counties (with the exception of Mercer); nevertheless, far more normal school graduates were employed in this type of school in the Norwegian counties (19) as compared to German-Russian counties (3). Of particular note, also, are the number of teachers in the reports who taught in one room school houses the entire term with either a permit or no certificate at all. In the four German-Russian counties, there were 128 such teachers. In the Norwegian counties there were only three. (See Table 4.)

School records, unfortunately, rarely indicate anything of the ethnic background of teachers or officials in administrative rank, but such information would be of value. The question of unconscious bias, the projection of role models for students, and ultimately the encouragement of an upward mobility in the various groups could be ascertained with such information. While the subject is a complicated one, the authors have begun the exploration of the matter by making an ethnic name analysis of all the county superintendents of schools in the years 1923 to 1925.[17] It was found that one fourth of the county superintendents, including the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, were of Norwegian background, half of the superintendents were of Yankee or Anglo-American background and the remaining tended to be primarily German. No one name was clearly German-Russian in background. For the eight counties of particular concern to this study, we can say conclusively that the superintendents in the German-Russian counties were not of that ethnic origin, while all the Norwegian counties had superintendents of Norwegian background. Indeed, a number of German-Russian counties had superintendents of Norwegian derivation. It is interesting to speculate on how the fact that the control of educational affairs by "outsiders" either at a state level or locally on the school boards, effected German attitudes toward public schooling. This, however, is a matter for another kind of research project. The Silva portion of this study will treat the question breifly.

SCHOOL CLASSIFICATION AND QUALITY

Another measure of school quality and ultimately of educational support is the variance in the classifications of the different schools as reported in the documents of the County Superintendents of Schools.

First, a look at graded schools. This more specialized institution was, in the past, considered better than an ungraded school. In contrast to the one room school, they were required by law to meet higher standards, i.e. libraries, subject matter, departments, administrative offices.

In 1923 the graded schools were all in towns. In that year Norwegian counties had significantly more pupils in graded schools than the German-Russian counties. In the Norwegian counties there were 5635 pupils in graded schools while in the German-Russian counties, there were only 3580. (The 1920 U.S. Census shows 39,670 total residents in the Norwegian counties and 32,882 in the German-Russian.) Divide County, the late settlement Norwegian county, had 1131 pupils in town graded schools. This was greater than any one of the German-Russian counties. (McIntosh the highest, had 1059.) [18]

A further index of community commitment to quality schools is revealed in a similar set of statistics found in a graph published by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1926. The proportion of students in graded schools, including classified high schools, were as follows: Divide 54%, Nelson 67%, Steele 48%, and Traill 70%. The German-Russian figures were: Logan 25%, McIntosh 37%, Mercer 35%, and Sheridan 34%. [19] In brief, the lowest Norwegian county had 48% and the highest German-Russian county had 37% of their students in graded schools. Again, it might be noted that Divide County, the latest county to be settled, was far above the earlier settled German-Russian counties. If the "grading" of schools has anything to do with determining the "quality" of schools, the Norwegians are clearly at an advantage.

When comparing the average length of terms as to numbers of days in graded schools (towns) for 1923, the differences were minimal. Norwegian county schools averaged 180 days per year, German-Russian counties reported almost the same with 175 days. [20] The situation

was quite different earlier, however, as seen in the School Superintendents Report of 1911. When the number of schools which taught "seven months or more" was reported, the Norwegian counties far surpassed the German-Russian. (264 Norwegian and 63 German-Russian.) Comparison of the two sets of reports indicates that the German-Russian area schools in the twelve intervening years made great efforts to catch up in the length of term category, and they were quite successful in their endeavors. [21]

ATTENDANCE AND PERSISTENCE

One basic and indisputable indicator of community support for education is whether young people are sent to school at all, and whether they persist in school once they started.

The following table from the 1910 U.S. Census clearly shows that German-Russian parents did not send their children to school to the same degree as Norwegian parents. In every county, the German percentage of the total of students enrolled is less than the Norwegian.

Number of children - ages 6 to 14 - 1910 - U.S. Census

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill	Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan
Total Children	891	2035	1516	2545	1448	1861	1064	1962
Number	667	1700	1250	2263	997	1021	643	1441
Percent	93.5	83.5	82.5	88.9	68.9	54.9	60.4	73.4
Children in School - 7 to 13 - U.S. Census - 1920								
Percent in School-7 to 13	93.5	95.2	91.0	94.8	88.0	94.0	94.5	96.1

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A decade later, as seen above, the United States Census indicated that the discrepancy between the German-Russians and Norwegian counties

had virtually disappeared. We may therefore conclude that, in so far as the "three Rs" in grade school are concerned, by 1920 the German-Russian parents were as insistent as the Norwegian parents that their children receive basic education.

The Norwegians attitudes, however, differed from the German-Russian in the matter of schooling beyond the basics. It was a question of how much education was deemed necessary. Presented below is a table of data from School superintendents' reports. For a comparison let us again note that the total population of the Norwegian counties in 1920 was 39,670 persons and the German-Russian counties numbered 32,882. The Norwegian population totaled about 16% more than the German. The following table concerns students finishing the eighth grade, also those in high school and those completing high school. The difference between the two groups' attitudes toward education beyond grade school is clearly shown.

Superintendent Report 1923, pp. 210-3

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill	Total	Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan	Total
Students Finishing 8th Grade	154	151	186	220	711	57	49	65	110	281
Students in High School	267	498	245	586	1536	121	108	134	149	512
Students Finishing High School	25	90	45	125	285	18	13	19	17	67

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Taking into consideration the relative size of the two national groups we see above that as they advance in years the German-Russian students increasingly leave the educational system. For every ten Norwegian county

children who finished the eighth grade, less than five did so in the German-Russian areas. Likewise, for every ten Norwegian students in high school, approximately three German-Russian students were in the same level of school. Finally, for every ten Norwegian county students who finished high school, less than three did so in the German-Russian schools.

The U.S. Census reports, shown below, some of which cover the same time period, lead one to the same conclusion. A surprisingly small proportion of young people in 1910 aged 15, 16, and 17 were in school: 64% of the Norwegians, 42% of the Germans. A decade later, the percent of 16 and 17 year olds was as follows: Norwegian, 57%, and German, 44%. Again, the German counties were decidedly less inclined to send their young people to school in the middle teenaged years. One must remember in this context, that some teenaged students, especially those who were born in foreign countries, were in the lower grades learning American basic language, history and civics. Some may have had a good background in the elementary schools of Europe and were doing remedial work in the American schools of their newly acquired homeland.

U.S. Census - 1910

Percent Attending School	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill	Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan
15-17 yrs.	57	62	72	65	42	21	42	63

U.S. Census - 1920

Percent Attending School	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill	Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan
16-17 yrs.	59.1	57.1	52.3	60.1	42.9	3[illegible]1	39.2	59.1

The inadequacy of early schools distressed some German-Russians. One Mercer County gentleman, who came to the area after spending his youth in

a South Dakota German area, wrote:

> The public school I had in South Dakota was worth less than nothing. My teacher did not know at the time a word of English and he did not know the ABC. He was about a sixth grade scholar in the German Language. My father had a fairly good education in German, so he taught us children in German. It was not mine or my parents fault that I did not then learn English but after I found it was up to me to learn English myself and this I have done the best I could as you can see I am writing this myself in my own hand.[22]

PARENTAL SUPPORT

Another measure of educational commitment, as revealed in the County Superintendent of Schools reports, is the number of parent organizations supporting the schools in the various counties. Such information is available for the years 1922-3. The reports indicate that there were twenty-two parent organizations in the four Norwegian counties, while the German-Russian counties had nine.

Keeping in mind that the German counties had a little less people (a total of 16% less), the number of reported parental visits to Norwegian county schools in 1922-3 is still proportionately higher than the visits by parents to German-Russian county schools in the same year. To be precise, in the Norwegian areas, 4189 visits took place, 2531 in the German-Russian. If parental visits reflect support for the student or the school, the Norwegian parents were clearly more supportive.

SEX DIFFERENCE

Some indication of the differing school performance of males and females within the national groups can be seen in several U.S. Census publications and also in an official North Dakota Education report. The 12th Biennial North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction for

1910-1 indicates that in that school year, Norwegian girls seemed to be in schools in greater number than Norwegian boys. In the German-Russian counties, the opposite appears to be true. The report gives the following data:

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Superintendent Report 1912, p. 98.

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill	Total	Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan	Total
Number of Boys Enrolled in County Schools	664	1276	711	1528	4179	804	944	702	1296	3746
Number of Girls Enrolled in County Schools	652	1233	885	1601	4371	749	819	514	1206	3283

The question arises as to why the Norwegians were more inclined to send their daughters to school while the German-Russians seemed more ready to send the boys to school. We can only guess. Did the Norwegians feel that women should be more equipped to deal with the more "refined" aspects of life and that men needed agricultural skills which school could not give? The opposite problem comes up in analyzing the German-Russian figures. Why school for the boys and not so much for the girls?

ILLITERACY

The United States Census Report of 1910 listed below shows the illiteracy rate among foreign born residents aged 10 or above to be higher than the local native born population. This is to be expected. Arrival in America was a recent thing; in fact, the foreign influx was still coming and only World War I closed it off definitely. The Norwegian counties, nevertheless, had less illiteracy than the German, (4.25% Norwegian, and 9.15% German.) The census report of ten years later, in 1920, however, is very interesting. As can be see below, the Norwegian counties reduced the difference between native and foreign born (with the exception

of the late homestead county, Divide.) The German-Russian counties see a widening gap between the two groups. McIntosh County is the only exception. One can only conclude that the Germans were in no great rush to acquire fluency in the English language, at least for those who were over ten years of age.

U.S. Census - 1910 - Persons 10 years and over

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill	Four County Average	Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan	Four Ctny. Avg.
Percent Native White Illiterate	1.4	.01	0.3	0.2	.36	2.1	6.6	.06	.09	2.55
Percent Foreign Born White Illiterate	3.0	3.1	6.2	4.7	4.25	8.5	16.8	2.7	8.6	9.15

U.S. Census - 1920 - Persons 10 years and over

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill	Four County Average	Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan	Four Ctny Avg.
Percent Native White Illiterate	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.23	1.0	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7
Percent Foreign Born White Illiterate	4.9	1.6	2.4	1.4	2.58	10.4	5.7	10.2	21.5	11.95

The United States Census of 1910 and 1920 show the varying rates of illiteracy for adult residents, those of voting age. As seen below, the 1910 illiteracy of such males (females were not recorded) in the German counties is higher than that of the Norwegian counties (2.1% Norwegian and 5.9% German.) One must remember that settlement was not complete in these years and the figures include the native born population. The second set of figures, 1920 census, taken after immigration had slowed

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almost to a halt, show illiteracy in the German counties decidedly higher than the Norwegian (German 11%, Norwegian 6.5%.)

U.S. Census - 1910

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill	Four County Average	Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan	Four County Average
Illiterate Males of Voting Age	2.0%	1.8	2.9	1.7	2.1	5.3	11.5	2.3	4.5	5.9

Note: 1910 Census does not record female literacy.

U.S. Census - 1920

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill	Four County Average	Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan	Four County Average
Illiterate Females of Voting Age	2.5%	1.1	1.0	0.8	1.35	9.6	5.5	9.1	19.8	11.0
Illiterate Males of Voting Age	2.9	0.7	1.0	0.7	1.33	5.5	2.8	5.4	12.3	6.5

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Of special interest, in the above data, is the difference between the illiteracy rates of males and females. In the 1920 census the degree of illiteracy in the Norwegian counties, whether male or female, is almost the same; in the German counties, the illiteracy rate among females of voting age or older is astonishingly higher than that of the males, almost twice as high. This is in accord with the 1910-1 information listed in the Superintendent of Public Instruction's Report printed previously which shows German-Russian counties had more boys in school than girls. The question of why literacy and classroom education should be valued more in the life of the German male than the female still remains. Perhaps the woman in the solidly German communities was not required by circumstances to learn the American ways; each little ethnic enclave was a community unto itself. The male, to the contrary, was forced to

trade with "outsiders," could be drafted into the army and necessarily had to keep abreast with American political and economic affiars.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE PROFESSIONS

The extent to which a national group enters the ranks of the professional educators may be an indicator of the level of acceptance of schools and formal education. Young people tend to become whatever is honored in the home. What is discouraged they avoid. In this light we see from an analysis of the Directory of the fifty-three County School Superintendents for the year 1923-5 that at least twenty-five percent of the officials had Scandinavian surnames, most of which were clearly of Norwegian origin. In contrast, only four superintendents had German names and these were most likely of non-Russian background. (One-half of the fifty-three superintendents were of old American Yankee origins.) [23]

Likewise, out of fifty-four students who received teacher certificates from the University of North Dakota in 1920, twenty-one had Scandinavian names. Since the vast majority of Scandinavians in North Dakota are of Norwegian origin, we must conclude that a good sized number of the graduating students mentioned above were Norwegian. German names on the list were few and none were of German-Russian background.

An examination of the roster of graduates of two state institutions of higher learning in selected years gives further insight into the educational values of the two groups in question. Commencement lists for the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks in 1910, 1920, and 1930 were selected. A list of graduates at Dickinson State Normal School, now Dickinson State College, was also chosen. The school opened its doors in 1918 so the names from the 1920, 1925, and 1930 graduation exercise

were studied. A careful name analysis, using ethnic recognition tools and local compilations of family histories, made it possible to determine with a degree of accuracy the national origins of the various students. The results were sometimes surprising.

The survey of the University of North Dakota graduates in 1910 reveals that out of 114 graduates, one-third had Scandanavian names (almost all Norwegian in background.) No German-Russian names were found. The above totals and those that follow reflect all the degree programs at the University, whether in engineering, business, education, liberal arts, science or at graduate level. The proportions remained the same for the class of 1920, 52 out of 156 graduates were of Scandanavian background (again, predominantly Norwegian.) No German-Russian names were present. In a third University of North Dakota group, the 315 graduates of 1930, a total of 84 Scandanavian names (mostly Norwegian) were found. This represents 27% of the class. At the same time, only one definite and one possible German-Russian student was on the roster.

The dearth of German-Russian graduates is especially remarkable for during the years in question at least 15% of North Dakota's population was of that nationality group.

Dickinson State Normal School was close to extremely large concentrations of German-Russians. The school, smaller and more informal in style, should, thereby, have attracted a good sized number of German students. Certainly the Dickinson enrollment proportions should be greater than the more distant Grand Forks University of North Dakota. The authors, using the procedure mentioned above, analyzed names on selected graduation lists to ascertain the variance between the two groups in question. The Dickinson Normal list was of particular interest in that the majority of its students,

at least in the early decades, were destined for employment at various levels in the teaching profession. The results should provide an additional measure of attitudes toward education within the two ethnic communities.

In 1920, twenty students graduated from the Dickinson School. Of that number, none were of German-Russian origins and 6 (30%) were of Scandinavian, for the most part Norwegian, in background.

Five years later, in 1925, out of 106 graduates, 25% had Scandinavian names while no more than eight (7%) were of German-Russian origin. Finally, in 1930, twenty-one (16%) of the 130 graduates were Scandinavian and only three were of definite and five of possible German-Russian ancestry. The German-Russian percentage, therefore, did not exceed six percent.

It must be remembered that Norwegians in those earlier decades were a minority group in the southwestern portion of the state. Some were found at Taylor and northward to Dunn Center. A larger number were present north of the Little Yellowstone River in the Alexander-Arnegard-Keene region and others were in Slope and Adams counties. But in the aggregate, they numbered probably less than one-fourth of the German-Russian population totals.

The proportions of college graduates listed above gives, without question, some indication of the varying attitudes toward education in the two groups. Virtually no German-Russians graduated from the University of North Dakota during the years in question, yet, in the same school a surprisingly large percentage of Norwegians, at least 30%, completed their course of study. Thirty percent is a good approximation of the proportion of Norwegians in the entire state population. Such a degree of participation in higher education by members of a relatively new "immigrant" group is quite unique. It is doubtful whether any other sizeable

North Dakota ethnic community can match that record.

The graduation record indicates what has already been seen on previous pages, that the Germans from Russia were reluctant to attend school beyond the level of necessary basic skills. Even when offered the opportunity close to home in Dickinson, they were, at least in the early decades of the century, hesitant to take advantage of a college education.

The observations made above are substantiated by a study of German-Russians done in 1965. William Sherman, when discussing the total enrollment situation at the University of North Dakota, quotes earlier sources and says:

> In 1921, the University of North Dakota had one student of German-Russian ancestry among the 1,215 in attendance. Voeller found only two at that University among the 1,828 who attended in 1940. (404 of Norwegian background, 424 from the British Isles and Ireland.) These figures are amazing when one realizes that there were, without a doubt, from fifty to a hundred thousand German-Russians in the state in these years. Times have changed, however, for this author, in a hasty check of the University of North Dakota, Student Directory for Fall of 1964, found over fifty students of this ancestry among the Catholics enrolled. No doubt the total of German-Russian students is several times this figure.[24]

FOOTNOTES

[1]Elwyn B. Robinson, History of North Dakota (Lincoln: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966) p.287.

[2]Leona N. Bergmann, Americans From Norway (New York: J.P. Lipincott Co., 1950) p.97.

[3]The question of ethnicity and its relation to education has seldom been studied, at least in Great Plains states. No serious investigation of the comparative performance of any North Dakota groups has been made. Certainly no investigation of the behavior of North Dakota's two leading groups, Norwegians and German-Russians, has ever been undertaken. Some few paragraphs and occasional references, have been published concerning individual groups, but no real analysis or explanation of alleged differences has been made. As will be seen in this study, Height and Giesinger make brief mention of education in the Russian homeland. Aberle is defensive, George Rath makes only a scattered reference to schools, Adolf Schock is sympathetic and Voeller is highly critical of German popular support for education in North Dakota. On the Norwegian side, Nora Fladeboe Mohlberg's works underline the high priority which Norwegian families placed on education, as does Aagot Raaen's memior, Grass of the Earth. Duane Lindberg's research attests to the concern North Dakota's Norwegians had for both public and private education.

[4]The choice of these counties is based on U.S. Census reports for foreign born and mixed parentage in 1910, 1920, and 1930. A more recent unpublished study of rural and small town ethnic totals by W. Sherman was also used. (See Table I.)

[5]The population differences are not of great consequence; in 1920 the four Norwegian counties had an average population of 9902, the German-Russian counties averaged 8649. The economic differences may, at times, effect the variance as far as school facilities and salaries are concerned. (See Table I.) The date of settlement and the vagaries of weather certainly influenced the economic worth of the farm families. Nevertheless, it seems that the German-Russian counties had less total farm property value than the eastern Norwegian counties. For this reason, the authors will continually refer to the Norwegian Divide County whose agricultural worth was comparable to the German-Russians. It must also be remembered that the state of North Dakota, from even the earliest period, was making some grants to rural and graded elementary schools in every county, and that high schools, in particular, were receiving aid.

[6]Twelfth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to the Govenor of North Dakota for the two years ending June 12, 1912, E.J. Tayler, Superintendent, p.91. Cited hereafter: Superintendent Report, 1912.

[7]Ibid, pp. 124-5

[8]Superintendent Report, 1922-3, pp. 190-1.

[9]Ibid, p. 190.

[10]Ibid, p. 184.

[11]Superintendent Report, 1898, p. 246.

[12]Diamond Jubilee Book, Napoleon [N.D.], 1959, p.11.

[13]Superintendent Report, 1912, pp. 183-4.

[14]Ibid, p. 105.

[15]Ibid, p. 179.

[16]Ibid, pp. 164-5.

[17]Superintendent Report, 1926, pp. 10-1.

[18]Superintendent Report, 1923, pp. 186-7.

[19]Superintendent Report, 1926, Exhibit D.

[20]Superintendent Report, 1923, pp. 186-7.

[21]Superintendent Report, 1912, pp. 100-1.

[22]August Isaak, "Personal Story", Unpublished, Mercer County Old Settlers History, Beulah, N.D., 1926.

[23]Superintendent Report, 1926, p. 10-1.

[24]William Sherman, "Assimilation in a North Dakota German-Russian Community," (Unpublished MA thesis, University of North Dakota,) 1965, p. 78-9. The 1921 figure is from John M. Gillette, "Economic and Social background of the University of North Dakota," The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota, XII, No.1, p. 41. The 1940 figure is from Joseph B. Voeller, "The Origins of the German-Russian People and Their Role in North Dakota," (Unpublished M.S. thesis, University of North Dakota, 1940,) p. 76.

CASE STUDY - SILVA, NORTH DAKOTA

School districts made up of equal proportions of students from Norwegian and German-Russian backgrounds are rare in North Dakota. The ethnic concentrations seldom are adjacent to each other. Yet one particular district has been found and studied with a degree of care. The results are published here for the first time. The information has a bearing on some of the issues discussed in earlier portions of this paper.

With the consolidation of schools in portions of Pierce County, the records of the Elverum Township school at Silva, North Dakota, became available to public scrutiny. The documents, now at the Institute for Regional Study Archives at North Dakota State University, detail almost the entire life history of the Silva grade and high school, through whose doors passed 2,053 students (pupil-year count) of which 1,070 were of Norwegian background and 983 of German-Russian ancestry.

The grade and high school began with the combining of several country schools in 1913. Though the school continued until the 1950's, the data contained in this study deals with the years until 1940. Settlement in the area took place in the 1890's, so the time period represents second and even third generation activities. The Silva village tended to be predominently Norwegian (perhaps 85%). The surrounding country areas embraced both Norwegian and German-Russian farm families. The school opened with eighteen students in grade school. In 1924, the high school had an all

time high enrollment of thirty. The twelve grades averaged about ninety students through the ensuing years, with a record enrollment of one hundred four students.

The information presented below is part of an analysis of the Silva school done by Walden Duchscher and William Sherman in 1971 in the hope of determining the differing performance of students from the two ethnic groups. The subject matter, the grades and the attendance, for every student in every year was studied in order to determine basic similarities and differences. In addition, the national backgrounds of the school personnel was considered in detail.*

SILVA ENROLLMENT AND ABSENTEEISM

Presented below are the enrollment and absentee records of the Silva grade school in five year intervals.

	Norwegian			Silva Grade School		German-Russian				
	Male	Female	Total	% Absent	Ave. Days Absent	Male	Female	Total	% Absent	Ave. Days Absent
1915-6	8	9	17	6.5%	11.6	3	1	4	13.3%	21.3
1920-1	21	22	43	4.1	7.4	26	21	47	7.1	12.8
1925-6	13	19	32	1.2	2.1	20	16	36	10.7	19.2
1930-1	18	19	37	1.3	2.3	15	18	33	8.5	15.3
1935-6	20	18	38	1.0	1.8	22	25	47	4.4	8.0
1940-1	15	14	29	5.9	10.7	22	25	47	7.7	13.9
Total all Years 1913-1940	421	413	834	4.2	7.4	415	443	858	7.3	13.0

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*Portions of the study were presented by Walden Duchscher in an unpublished paper given at the Conference on the History of the Red River Valley and Northern Plains, April 28, 1972, Fargo, North Dakota.

As can be seen, the enrollment of both German and Norwegian pupils in 1920-1 and the ensuing years was about equal. German-Russian girls tended to be present in slightly greater numbers than boys. The opposite is true among Norwegians. The differences are probably too slight to be significant. Absenteeism, however, is quite clearly more prevalant among the Germans. German students were absent 7.3% of the time and Norwegian children missed school only 4.2% of the time.

The Silva High School data presented below shows a different picture; hardly any German-Russian students were present until 1930, and even after that they were only a little more than half the numbers of the Norwegians. The male and female totals for both groups were much the same and the absentee percentages showed little difference. The study does seem to show that, when the German-Russian boys or girls went to High School, they were just as conscientious about attendance as were the Norwegians.

	Norwegian				Silva High School	German-Russian				
	Male	Female	Total	% Absent	Av. Days Absent	Male	Female	Total	% Absent	Av. Days Absent
1920-21	6	6	12	4.3	7.8	1	1	2	2.2	4.0
1925-6	6	9	15	4.2	7.6	0	2	2	1.4	2.5
1930-1	5	7	12	2.9	5.2	3	5	8	5.7	10.3
1935-6	4	7	11	2.3	4.1	4	3	7	4.7	8.3
1940-1	11	6	17	6.2	11.1	7	4	11	6.9	12.5
Total Above Years	32	35	67	4.0	7.1	15	15	30	4.2	7.5

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These figures are consistent with the earlier findings of the study when Superintendent of Public Instruction documents and census reports were analyzed. Germans went to high school in fewer numbers than Norwegians.

PERSISTENCE IN SILVA SCHOOL

The Duchscher-Sherman study of the Silva School discovered some very decisive differences. During the years from 1920-2 to 1939-40 a surprisingly low proportion of the German-Russian males (39.6%) who entered the first grade actually finished the eighth grade. The female German-Russian figure is about the same as the Norwegian. (See below.) This Silva school observation differs from the state wide data mentioned earlier in the paper which shows German males stayed in school longer than females.

ALL STUDENTS - 1920 to 1940

	Norwegian			German-Russian		
	Male	Female	Average Total	Male	Female	Average Total
Entered first grade and finished eighth	80.9%	86.7%	84.0%	39.6%	85.4%	63.0%
Entered Silva High School After Finishing Silva eighth	88%	78%	83%	68.4%	56.1%	62.0%

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One thing seems to be clear above: more Norwegian young people continued on into high school than Germans. If German boys -- a small minority -- finished grade school, they were more inclined to go to high school than were the German girls. But for the girls, completing grade school was a definite goal (85.4% made it), but after the goal was achieved, only 56.1% went further.

COMPARATIVE SCORES

The Silva study provides a unique opportunity for some analysis of the comparative performance of the two groups as they confront the various subject matter disciplines. The record of every student in every year was determined and the respective grades were assessed.

GRADE SCHOOL SCORES - EVERY STUDENT

	Reading	Writing	Math	English	Average Grade
German-Russian	83	85	81	83	83
Norwegian	87	86	85	85	86

These scores involve the school years of 1917-8 to 1940-1, inclusive, of Silva School.

As can be seen, the German-Russians did have lower scores but surprisingly the differences were not great. With the lesser emphasis placed on education in the German-Russian home observed earlier in the paper, one might expect the German average scores to be much lower than indicated above. It shows that these children were, practically speaking, comparable to their Norwegian peers.

The High School scores, too, are remarkably similar.

HIGH SCHOOL SCORES - EVERY STUDENT

	English	Math	History	Average Score
German-Russian	88	83	88	86
Norwegian	89	89	89	89

These scores run from the school year 1922-3 to 1934-5, inclusive, of Silva School.

The scores in English and reading are of particular interest, for Duchscher-Sherman say that the great majority, if not all, of the German students spoke German in their homes and began to seriously use English only on arrival in the first grade. In spite of this, the English scores in grade school were 83 (German) versus 85 (Norwegian) and 83 and 87 respectively in reading. In high school the English scores are even more

remarkable, for German students average scores came to 88 and Norwegians received an average score of 89. This indicates that initial difficulties in the transition period from the German language home to the English grade school must not have been serious or long-lasting.

The above data is the first definite measure the authors have been able to obtain in regard to actual classroom performance. For the most part, the Germans did almost as well as their Norwegian counterparts. In ability, diligence and performance they seem much the same.

STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION

Often in the above paper, the question of the national background of the school personnel has come up. Did it effect the students performance? As seen repeatedly, Norwegians and others were often in the educational establishment. German-Russians were not. Silva was no exception. School Board membership is discussed first.

From the beginning of the year 1913, with the consolidation of the township school board, and until the year 1940, a total of 26 different citizens served on the school board. This represents a total of 108 member-years on the school board. Of these 26 board members, 25 were Norwegian and only one was German-Russian. The German-Russian member served a term of one year. It should be remembered that these board members were elected by the people of the township.

Board Members

Number		Board member-years	
Norwegian	German-Russian	Norwegian	German-Russian
25	1	107	1

Records concerning board members are from the year 1913-40, inclusive.

As can be seen, of the total number of 108 member-years of the school board, only one member-year was filled by a German-Russian. In addition, it can also be pointed out that of these 27 years of school, with a total of 11 men serving as board presidents, not one German-Russian was president; all 11 being Norwegian.

TEACHERS

The following table shows that 61.1% of the teachers were Norwegian and only 9.3% were German-Russian. The German-Russians did slightly better in terms of the position of principal. Of the principals 53.3% were Norwegian and 20% were German-Russian.

Principals

	Norwegian	German-Russian	Other Nationality
Number	8	3	4
Percentage	53.3%	20%	26.7%

Records concerning school principals are from the years 1913-40, inclusive.

Teachers

	Norwegian	German-Russian	Other Nationality
Number	33	5	16
Percentage	61.1%	9.3%	29.6%

Records concerning teachers are from the years 1913-40, inclusive.

BUS DRIVERS

The bus drivers submitted closed bids for their jobs. An individual could submit only one bid, and that was for the route in his area. The school board opened the bids and the lowest bid for each route received

the job. As seen below, the drivers were from both groups.

Bus Drivers

	Norwegian	German-Russian
Number	18	16
Percentage	52.9%	47.1%

Records concerning bus drivers are from the 1913-40, inclusive.

JANITORS

The janitors of the school, only six in the entire period, were solely from Norwegian background. Closed bids were submitted to the school board and the janitor was then hired at the opening of the bids. A German-Russian was never hired.

A QUESTION

The data presented above gives rise to a very real question: why, if the student population of the school was relatively equal, was almost the sole membership of the school board Norwegian? Why were the teachers preponderently Norwegian, and why were all the janitors Norwegian? Why were the bus drivers almost 50% German-Russian? Certainly, a part of the answer has to do with the peculiarities of local politics. One does get the distinct impression that the German-Russians didn't want to get involved in school questions. The considerable number of grade school students of German background argues to the presence of a sizeable German population. It would seem that they could have insisted on a greater share of responsible elected positions if they had wished.

A more fundamental question arises; did the high percentage of Norwegian teachers have any effect on the slightly lower scores of the German-Russian

students? The answer would seem to be no. The teachers did not favor either ethnic group. Upon study of numerous individual cases, Duchscher, a native of Silva, says the range of a German students' grades was consistently the same from year to year or class to class no matter what the nationality of the teacher might have been. If in a given year, a student fell far below his average score, the entire class was also below their prior average. Rather than a question of ethnicity, we probably see here the differences in the scoring system of individual teachers.

SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Differences between the two groups were most obvious in the "political" aspect of school life. Silva school board members were, with one exception, entirely Norwegian. All the janitors were Norwegian, so also were most of the teachers and the majority of the principals. It seems that Norwegian citizens looked at the school with great concern and, in a way, saw it as their own special preserve. The German-Russians, on the other hand, proved to be often uninterested in school management affairs.

Records clearly indicate that only a small proportion, slightly over one-third, of the German-Russian males finished Silva Grade School during the years under study. The German-Russian females survival rate was twice that number. In contrast, the great majority of Norwegian males and females completed grade school.

Surprisingly, if the German-Russian male finished grade school, chances were very good (over 80%) that he would at least enter high school. Only half of the German-Russian females entered high school. Lists of those who actually graduated from high school were unfortunately not available.

Attendance records and achievement marks in various classes show that the German-Russians did not do quite as well as their Norwegian counterparts; average absences were higher and marks were lower in every category. But the differences were not great. Contrary to the generalizations some North Dakota writers have made, the differences in Silva between the performances of the Germans who did go to grade and high school and their Norwegian fellow pupils was only a matter of several percentage points. Considering the almost exclusively German speaking home life and the low priority given institutionalized education in the German-Russian family the performance of the two student groups were remarkably similar.

BACKGROUND IN EUROPE

The question posed by the evidence given above invites an explanation. Why did the Germans from Russia lag behind the Norwegians in their educational endeavors in North Dakota? We are convinced that the answer lies in the conditions that existed in their homelands on the eve of their departure and the attitudes they brought with them to North Dakota. What remains then is first to briefly describe the education and mileau in Norway and among the Germans in Russian, second to try to discern the differences, and finally to determine <u>how</u> these differences affected their attitudes and achievements in education in North Dakota.

By way of introduction it should be kept in mind that these two groups come from cultures which had <u>some</u> things in common. Both were overwhelmingly rural in character, what the anthropologist might call "folk societies," as distinct from "modern secular" cultures. They both adhered, by and large, to old confessional churches, particularly Lutheran or Roman Catholic. Loyalty tended to be to the family, to church, and to a place instead of a nation. While these similarities are not unimportant, the <u>differences</u> between Norway and South Russia during the late 19th century far outweigh the similarites.

BACKGROUND IN NORWAY

While the Norwegians achieved independence from Denmark in 1814, they were forced to accept a dynastic union with Sweden the following year. They did, however, govern themselves internally with the most

democratic constitution of the day in Europe, and as the century wore on they, together with other Europeans, became increasingly nationalistic -- they took pride in being Norwegian. Even if poor, they were free. Indeed, the Norwegian farmer had never been a serf, as had most peasants on the continent, and during the 19th century this tradition of freedom made them welcome settlers in the new American Repulbic. They came from Norway, land of the heroic Vikings. Now, of course, the great age of the Vikings had passed into oblivion 900 years before, but the romantic movement in literature and history revived it. From the mid-1800's, in Scandinavia, England, Germany, and the United States scholars and laymen alike were extolling the virtues of the Vikings - rugged, daring, hard-working, reliable. So when Norwegians came to North Dakota, this was, at least in part, some of the baggage they brought with them. One need only peruse the national origins quota as set forth by the immigration law of 1924! Norwegians were welcome; eastern and southern Europeans, not to mention orientals, were not.

From the standpoint of education, a happy by-product of this Viking mania was the fact that a good deal of the ancient literature dealt with Norway; sagas, epic poems, and pagan myths were all popular fare by the latter half of the 19th century in Norway. We should not, of course, imagine that every Norwegian immigrant to North Dakota was steeped in the literature; still, most were aware of the heroic past. Another spur to literacy, and ultimately some education beyond the "three R's," was Bible reading. While the Norwegian priesthood saw it as their mission to interpret God's word, the layman was expected to read the Bible and Luther's catechism.

Education in Norway, as elsewhere, had always been a church affair; however, beginning in the 1700's the concept of a state or secular system

was at least advanced. In 1739 the state attempted to establish elementary schools throughout Norway, supported by a general tax. In theory, schools were to be set up in every parish. Because of the extreme poverty of rural Norway, however, this did not become an accomplished fact until well over a century later; but a start had been made, especially in the towns. Mention has already been made of the tradition of a free peasantry from Viking times in Norway. However, because only three percent of the land was arable, most farmers were forced into fishing and timber cutting to survive. The population explosion of the 1700's and 1800s meant even less land for more people. So, while there were schools in the towns, there were few in the overcrowded and hard-pressed rural areas. The rugged nature of the terrain and the isolation of many farmsteads made it doubly difficult to establish schools. One solution to this was the "ambulatory school" -- teachers traveling from one isolated farm to another. A beneficial side effect of the system was that parents, grandparents, and other relatives learned something as well.

The single most important development in promoting a free and compulsory educational system was the advent of the constitution of 1814. If the general adult population was to be, in the last analysis, the ultimate authority, then their education became an inescapable obligation. The real foundation for a widespread school system in the rural areas was the law of 1860 requiring elected officials to establish elementary schools in each parish and to offer more than the "three R's" and religion; some history, geography, and general science were to be offered as well. [1] In 1875 there were about 245,000 elementary pupils in a population of slightly less than two million; 25 years later this had risen to over 338,000. The number served by itinerant schools was less than one percent

by 1900. While the ratio of teachers to pupils also rose dramatically between 1875 and 1900, the percentage of women teachers rose from less than one percent of the total in 1875 (312) to almost 36% (2613) in 1900. By 1920, when emigration from Norway to the U.S. declined to a trickle, the percentage of women teachers had reached 45%. [2] This illustrates that, in so far as education was concerned, women had been accepted into the teaching profession. It should not, then, be surprising to find this carried over into North Dakota. The figures given above also help to explain why there was, at least for their own language, a remarkably high degree of literacy among the Norwegians who came to North Dakota.

It is perhaps not irrelevant to point out here that a very large number of the early Norwegian settlers in the state had spent some time in the United States before arriving in North Dakota. While the language of the home and church was still Norwegian, they had acquired some knowledge of the English language and of American institutions in Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, or South Dakota first.

The number of students in Norway who went on to junior high and high school was small until the late ninteenth century. But the number who went beyond the elementary school in the years between 1870 and World War I increased dramatically. From 1875 to 1920 the average number of graduates per year from junior high school rose from 147 to 4226. Likewise, the number who took the final examination at the end of their high school work rose from 199 per year in 1875 to 1260 per year in 1920; about 80% passed this examination. [3]

It goes without saying that not many university students from Norway, much less graduates, wound up in the frontier state of North Dakota. The point here, however, is that Norway had a university system during the great period of emigration from the end of the American Civil War to

World War I. Very few could aspire to a university education, but its influence was felt far beyond its own walls. In 1870, there were slightly over 1,000 students in all the institutions of higher education, and by 1920 this had risen to about 2800. This included the totals in agricultural and engineering sciences as well as teacher colleges. [4] It is clear, then, that when large numbers of Norwegians left their homeland in the years from 1870 to the First World War, the state system of education was well established. Norwegians were moving from a "folk" society to a modern one, and the schools were important in this transition.

There were additional forces at work in Norway, exclusive of the state schools, which did much to encourage a positive committment to education. Historians of Scandinavian societies during the past century have accorded a high place to what they call the democratic "folk movements", or a type of popular volunteer association. They had a direct influence on the educational values of the rank and file. These movements, each encompassing large numbers of people, and often overlapping in their membership, experienced their greatest popularity during the same years that saw the largest influx of Scandinavians to the new world. The movements, all with local and nation-wide organizaiton, included the temperance-prohibition movement, trade unions, political parties, and the adult education and folk high school movements. Because they were all reformist in character, an important part of their work was to form study groups and schools with the purpose of persuading their opponents and the noncommited. No less in Norway than in Denmark and Sweden, all of these movements had their night classes, short courses, itinerant lectures and publications. So, for the large number of Norwegians who could not attend the state schools beyond the required seven years, there were many other opportunites for post elementary school learning. Ingrid Semmingson had this to say about these organizations in Norway:

> The popular movements and voluntary organizations were forged by the middle class, particularly by the lower middle class, and later by the working class. These were an expression of and conversely, effectively furthered the urge of the social groups for self-assertion . . . Religious movements were the first popular movements in the country districts. In political life organizations appear for the first time at the Parliamentary elections of 1851 . . . These various clubs or organizations were to form a school of citizenship. This provided an experience of democracy on a small scale which gave training in democracy and taught the responsibilities of citizenship.[5]

Of particular importance for the rural district of Norway according to Semmingson were the "folk high schools."[6] These were very informal schools for farm youths in their late teens or early 20's: no exams, no admission requirements, just a boarding school to discuss current issues with a teacher during winter months on an informal basis.

In all of these movements young Norwegians of fairly low social and economic origins learned how to debate issues and, ultimately, how to persuade others as to the virtue of their cause. There can be no doubt that many Norwegians who came to North Dakota were at least aware of these many societies, if not actual members. Attitudes in America toward education (and one might suggest, toward political involvement) were effected by these popular movements.

In conclusion then, it is clear that the educational mileau in Norway during the period of emigration to North Dakota was a lively one for the lower classes. What remains then is to make a connection between that mileau and the North Dakota experience of the Norwegian immigrant.

Charles Anderson, a scholar who treats immigration history to the U.S. in general and the assimilation process in particular, singled out the Norwegians for their ability to adapt to the American mainstream:

> As steadfast Protestants, reliable Republicans (except for a brief episode with the Populists), voiciferous opponents of slavery, zealous Prohibitionists. . . ., and persons steeped

> in agrarian virtues, Norwegian Americans have never threatened the ideology of Anglo-Saxon America. On the contrary, Norwegians have been among its utmost strident advocates.[7]

Anderson points out that "They experienced no great difficulty in acquiring the educational and vocational skills required to compete successfully in American society, and once they possessed these prerequisites, they were allowed to use them, to the fullest." An important part of our thesis in this essay is that the Norwegians who came to North Dakota brought with them the "prerequisites" mentioned above.

It goes without saying that the school experience of the Norwegians in North Dakota was not entirely positive. There were Norwegians who put very little into their schools, or at least the very minimum. In the central part of the state at the turn of the century, we read of one Norwegian dominated school where the author never saw a parent visit the school, where parents were reluctant to buy textbooks, and where there were no pictures on the walls nor curtains on the windows. She continues that there was never any playground equipment; the building was primitive and poorly maintained, and the nearest well for water was a half-mile away. Finally, she reports that in her years at the school there were never any library or reference books, only a dictionary on a stand.[8] This, however, was a description of a fledgling school in a pioneer setting. For the Norwegians as for everyone else, the home, crops and livestock came first. Nevertheless, the evidence given earlier in this essay suggests that, once the hardest years were behind them, the Norwegians did show a penchant for education.

In this regard, a Lutheran scholar of English-speaking background is quoted by E. Clifford Nelson in his study of the Norwegian Lutheran Church. The theologian, an observer of early 20th century Great Plains Norwegians, said:

> And how they love education. How they will plan and how ready they are to sacrifice and to suffer that their children may have an education. I actually saw large families living in sod shacks on the open prairie sending a boy or a girl to Concordia College [Moorhead, Minnesota]. Am sorry to say that I have not seen anything like this among the Germans.[9]

When asked what one quality isolated the Norwegian immigrants in North Dakota from other European immigrants, Nora Fladeboe Mohberg, chronicler of Norwegian pioneers in the state, wrote that she held to her "original idea that their love of reading is the key to their viewpoints on a number of subjects . . . . Thus I have arrived at the conclusion that Norwegians go into politics because they feel that something should be done — so they go ahead and try to do it. The people I have known best are not social climbers, but are more likely reformers from the pulpit, the press, or public office."[10] It is, of course, true that Norwegians have dominated state elective offices out of all proportion to their numbers in North Dakota. The lowest percentage is for the office of governor — 30% have been Norwegian. This requires an explanation. In describing the early years of the Sons of Norway Lodge, in Fairdale, Rosanna Gutterud Johnsrud, a poet, writes:

> . . . it was a most happy and enthusiastic lodge and we young ones quickly caught the magic of its Norse spirit. Special inspirational speakers awakened our awareness of the cultural values of our heritage. The best in music and song was shared—and all in the Norwegian language. A fine library was established in the lodge--it was there I first read Ibsen in Norwegian. The lodge early began presenting plays.[11]

It is not entirely insignificant that Ibsen is best known for his social dramas. There were Sons of Norway lodges throughout the state.

The church was the primary organization for the immigrant, and its role as an agent for educating the transplanted Norwegians can scarcely be over-estimated. In 1883 the Bang Lutheran Church in Steele County founded the Bang Reading Society. According to its constitution it was "organized for the purpose of purchasing good books and establishing a library and promoting the reading of same." Later a Young People's

Literary Society was organized at Bang Church to engage in debates, music and readings.[12] Altogether some twelve Norwegian Lutheran schools for higher learning were founded in North Dakota. By 1922 only two were still in operation.[13] A few of the better known were Grand Forks College, Oakridge Academy in Fargo, and Bruflat Academy at Portland.

The foregoing illustrates one thing. There is some basis for the image which North Dakota's Norwegians have of themselves -- that they have a commitment to education beyond the basics. There is a certain substance behind the image. The best known memoir to come out of the Norwegian community in North Dakota is Aagot Raaen's Grass of the Earth: Immigrant Life in the Dakota Country, (1950.) If there is one theme in her story, it is surely the drive to become an educated person. While her story is by no means typical, it does serve to personify an aspiration for education which was deep in the hearts of many North Dakota Norwegians.

FOOTNOTES

[1]George M. Wiley, The Organization and Administration of the Educational System of Norway, Oslo, 1955, p. 25.

[2]Norges Offisielle Statistikk XII 291, Historisk Statistikk 1978, Oslo, 1978, p. 619.

[3]Ibid, p. 623.

[4]Ibid, p. 632.

[5]Ingrid Semmingson, "The Dissolution of Estate Society in Norway," Scandinavian Economic History Review No.2, 1954, pp. 199-200.

[6]Ibid, pp. 199-200.

[7]Charles H. Anderson, White Protestant Americans From National Origins to Religious Group (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: 1970), p. 69.

[8]Barbara Levorsen, The Quiet Conquest, A History of the Lives and Times of the First Settlers of Central North Dakota, (Hawley, Minnesota: 1974) pp. 114-118.

[9]E. Clifford Nelson, The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian Americans, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House: 1960) Vol. II, p. 113.

[10]Letter to Playford V. Thorson, March 27, 1977.

[11]Letter to Playford V. Thorson, October 10, 1978.

[12]Duane R. Lindberg, Mend the Cloth and the Social Cultural Fabric of the Norwegian Ethnic Community in North Dakota, (University of Minnesota: 1975) p. 102.

[13]Ibid, p. 98.

BACKGROUND IN RUSSIA

Any discussion of the level and condition of educational enterprises in the German villages of Russia treads on sensitive ground. The three generations in Russia, roughly 1800 to 1900, necessarily form a background for the tender matter of German-Russian performance in the United States. Echoes of prejudicial remarks and biased comments rebound throughout the question. Aberle reacts sharply to American criticism. He says, "By the time the schools opened in Russian villages, the colonists had some of the finest elementary schools in the country . . . high schools, gymnasiums, and several colleges."[1] Other students of the subject are not so sure, at least in terms of the first half century of colonization. (We speak here of the Black Sea villages, for they are the forebearers of our North Dakota Germans.) Height, and several other authors, refer to the first five decades (until at least 1860) as the "dark years" and he calls it a time of "frustration and stagnation. . . of decadence and regression."[2] Many of the first adult Dakota settlers left Russia in the 1870's and 1880's, so we must conclude that their formative years were during this dark period. This fact alone may have some bearing on their subsequent attitude toward the American educational system. But let us take a closer look at the first Russian decades.

When the German settlers arrived in the Black Sea areas, they were faced with enormous physical and cultural difficulties. The erection of a school system was a small part of a total adjustment problem. The mere

question of physical survival was of immediate importance. They entered, with little support, a primitive land, far away from their original homeland, an unfamiliar environment with inadequate roads, meager housing and a difficult agricultural situation. The death rate in the first years was appalling. Schools, at least quality schools, were a luxury which the first generation could not afford. The question of survival overrode all other considerations. The land, the work, the building of home and village—these were the pressing problems. As Frederick Jackson Turner would say in a later context, the frontier bred practicality; the niceties of culture were secondary.

In the first years of settlement, illiteracy, at least in many villages, was the rule and not the exception. Brendel, writing of the Catholic Kutschurgan colonies, lists the ratio in 1812. Elsass Village had 89% illiteracy, Mannheim had 79%, Kandel and Selz had 72%, Strassburg had 64%.[3] Other villages must have reflected something of the same.

In going to Russia, a decisive break was made with Germany. The taproot to the parent culture had been all but severed. Mail and other forms of communication were rare. German educated professionals were absent from the migration. The Germans found themselves in relatively isolated villages, far from the artistic and scholarly centers of the homeland. Likewise, the villagers, jealous of their traditions, had little contact with Russian institutes of higher learning. The literacy and scientific advances which thrilled the population of Germany as the century proceeded were unknown to much of the Volkdeutsch of Russia. Few if any figures of intellectual stature captured the imagination of the survival-minded villagers.

There were, of course, no public schools. Height says, "Throughout the one hundred year history of the colonies, the government never con-

tributed a ruble of tax money to the building or operation of the village schools."[4] The first educational establishments were primitive and were usually under the aegis of the clergy. Often the Church sexton was the schoolmaster. The Catholic villages had an additional disadvantage in that the clergy for the first two generations tended to be Polish in background. Giesinger says that Polish priests "left the schools in the hands of colonist schoolmasters who were often ignorant and incompetent."[5]

Protestant villages also had difficulties. Even in the rather late year of 1859, a survey of Grossliebental district schools (7 Evangelical, 4 Catholic) showed an average of two blackboards, one abacus, a dozen ABC primers and 160 tablets per school. This meant one textbook and one slate for every four children.[6] Nevertheless, the Protestant schools fared better than the Catholic. Neglect of education by disdainful Polish clergy was not a burden in the Protestant villages. Many authors observe that, though educational conditions were still primitive, Protestant areas made some small advances while the Catholic colonies lagged behind in the earliest decades.

Governmental, clerical and environmental forces may have hindered the growth of schools in the villages, but the blame must also be put on the attitude of the villagers themselves. Apparently, they saw little value in formal education. Geisinger says, "By default, and through the power of the purse, control lay in the hands of the colonists themselves . . . the conservative peasant mentality, suspicious of all innovation, saw no need for educational frills. . . "[7] Brendal concurs when he says, "The colonists, . . . being materialists, they didn't get excited about their schools. Also they were stingy with their money. . . " They preferred leaving their sons and daughters possessions, particularly land, rather than education.[8]

A serious and continuing difficulty was the fundamental lack of teacher training. Ultimately, the villagers wanted German teachers in their classrooms and lecture halls. But the institutions of higher education were either far away in Germany or were Russian schools which meant, in either case, a young man or woman was forced to leave his family or people and spend long periods of time in alien circumstances. This fact, coupled with the low salary and prestige allotted to school employees, brought about a continuance of the dearth of adequate teacher training. Eventually, about mid-century, at the insistence of some leaders, particularly some clergy, and the Russian government, several teacher colleges were established. No popular reform or rank and file betterment movement swept the German areas at the time. There was nothing like the Norwegian "folk" experience. On the contrary, it seems that the pressure to change came from outsiders, even from the Russian civil officials. Keller, in assessing the educational problems of the villages almost one hundred years after settlement, said in 1904, "Another consideration that also speaks unfavorably for striving for education of the colonists is that almost always the initiative for founding a school comes not from themselves but from other persons." [9] A Protestant school was founded in the Bessarabia in 1844, and this institution began to provide teachers.[10] The establishment of a seminary in 1857 at Saratov helped with the education problems of the Catholic clergy. By the 1870's teachers' colleges, some under both Protestant and Cathoic auspices, were producing a steady flow of graduates and much was being done to alleviate the situation. Brendal says, "In the beginning of the 1880's the education system experienced a renewal, and there developed more interest than prevailed before."[11] The political scene was deteriorating, enforced Russification was taking place, but a series of Landamtschulen

and other such institutions developed to supplement the village schools. Increasingly, the Czar's government insisted on higher standards, much with an eye to enforcing the Russian language and culture. For many Germans the school became an instrument of an alien way of life. A rebirth was taking place, but by this time the Germans were leaving for America.

IN AMERICA

Arrival in America meant conditions both the same, yet different. Again, a primitive prairie; again, the struggle to survive with its corresponding work emphasis, the land, the family and the dorf. Again the Germans found themselves in an alien world, thousands of miles from Russia and completely out of touch with modern Germany. It was almost a repeat of the scene which their ancestors faced in previous generations. Schools were primitive and other matters took first place. Nina Farley Wishek remembers her early country school in McIntosh County, "It was the usual tan-grey sod building with only one room in which to live, eat, sleep and have school."[12] For the early Germans in south central North Dakota, long hours of work, harsh winter, and muddy springs took their toll in educational matters. Wishek says, "In the early days, the schools were short terms, usually two months, never more than three."[13] Frequently, incompetent individuals were the only ones to accept teaching jobs. Adolph Shock quotes a teacher in the German school whose official report went as follows: "My ame (sic) has been this winter to learn my students all of the English I posebel could."[14] In 1906, Jessie Tanner says, "Some of the German-Russians do not send their children to school, complaining that teachers fail to understand them and neglect them."[15]

Again there was the fear that the public school, the bearer of English language and Anglo-Saxon traditions, would lessen the contact with family and people, those ever-necessary supports which alone had brought them through the harsh years of Russia. Schock says. "This American system caused some apprehension among the communities, fearing that the German language would ultimately be entirely replaced by the English language, so that in time the German heritage would not only be lost but children would become estranged to their parents."[16]

As seen in the census and Superintendent of Public Instruction reports listed above, a distinction must be made between education which was a matter of vocational skills and those studies which are often called the "fine arts" or the "Humanities." The life of a successful farmer or a village artisan involved a thorough knowledge of the trade and this necessarily meant the ability to read, write, and "figure." Parents in German-Russian counties accepted education to 5th and 6th grades. All the census data indicates that by 1920 the proportions of students attending school from the ages of 7 to 13, whether in German-Russian or Norwegian counties, ranged in the 90 percent catagories. (See table, p. 12.) In matters of high school enrollment, however, the German-Russian students, at least until the 1930's, dropped well behind their Norwegian counterparts. College attendance for German students was almost unheard of in those same years. Education beyond the requirements of farmer and craft type of skills was frowned upon. Only in one area was it accepted--the seminary and the convent and clergy-training schools. In both Catholic and Protestant villages, such a possibility was highly regarded. But here, too, one gets the impression that these institutions may have been seen as a type of clerical trade school.

The failure of German-Russian families to encourage extensive formal education was not all a one-sided affair. The Germans, coming from the Ukraine, bore the stigma of the Russian peasant. As mentioned previously, many Anglo-Americans of the time tended to look with some disfavor on the arrival of Eastern European immigrants. Certainly, they were not embraced with warmth and welcomed into the intimacy of full American life. The German-Russian had no Viking or romatic past, but rather bore the image of a dull, long suffering, primitive peasant worker. The school officials themselves did not always have the compassion of Nina Farley Wishek. Thus, the non-German Superintendent of Schools in German-Russian Stark County complains in 1906, "Approximately eighty percent of the people of the rural districts were recent arrivals from foreign countries and were generally illiterate and clannish and decidedly indifferent to the establishment and patronage of the public school."[17] One wonders whether the doors of the state's high schools and colleges were opened as widely for the German young people as they were for Norwegians and other immigrants from more acceptable North European countries.

Yet even in the earliest decades there were those who saw a certain ability and eagerness in the German students. Nina Farley Wishek says, "I found the children alert and eager to learn."[18] University of North Dakota Professor Bek says in 1915, "It is interesting to observe the descendants of the Ruszlaender when they are given an opportunity for education in our schools . . . . they reveal an aptness and a zeal . . ."[19]

A CHANGE

A kind of watershed in educational aspirations seem to have come about in the years of World War II. A series of events happened that changed the perspective of both parents and children. It may have been

in the 1930's with the disastrous dry years. Perhaps then German fathers, especially those with large families, began to doubt the wisdom of seeing the future exclusively in terms of farming and small town life. Thomas Cummings suggests a change was taking place in the late 1930's. After studying enrollments, library statistics, and the aportionment of funds he says, "Inference from these figures should lead the analyzer to the conclusion that, education was valued by the German-Russians of McIntosh County and that if there was any opposition to education earlier in the century, it was overcome by the late 1930's." [20]

What Cummings may have detected could have been the first robin of a summer. The authors are convinced that by the 1950's a dramatic shift had taken place in the German-Russian perspective. Whether in response to the mid-thirties drought or the sudden increase of land values, the expanded horizons of World War II or the GI Bill, something had happened. German boys and girls began to finish high school in great numbers and many went on to the state's colleges and technical institutes. In 1942, Schock, writing perhaps from personal experience, makes a comment that may be central to the question, "Children were appraised in terms of their economic value. Not until the problem of giving each son a farm arose would parents turn their attention toward education and the advisability of having their son enter a profession." [21]

The matter of post World War II change will be discussed in the following pages.

FOOTNOTES

[1]George P. Aberle, From the Steppes to the Prairies (Dickinson, North Dakota: Privately Published, 1965) p. 47.

[2]Joseph S. Height, Paradise on the Steppe, (Bismarck: North Dakota Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1972) p. 211.

[3]Johannes Brendel, "The German Colonies in the Kutschurgan Region," Heritage Review, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April, 1980) p. 25.

[4]Height, Paradise on the Steppe, p. 211.

[5]Adam Giesinger, From Catherine to Khrushchev (Battleford, Sask.: Marian Press, 1974) p. 216.

[6]Joseph S. Height, Homesteaders on the Steppe (Bismarck: North Dakota Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1975) p. 255.

[7]Giesinger, From Catherine to Khrushchev, p. 177.

[8]Brendel, "The German Colonies in the Kutschurgan Region," p. 25.

[9]Conrad Keller, The German Colonies in South Russia, 1804 to 1904, Vol.1, (translated into English by A. Becker, Saskatoon, Sask.) p. 82.

[10]Giesinger, From Catherine to Khrushchev, p. 177.

[11]Brendel, "The German Colonies in the Kutchurgan Region," p. 26.

[12]Nina Farley Wishek, Along the Trails of Yesterday (Ashley, North Dakota: The Ashley Tribune, 1941), p. 180.

[13]Ibid, p. 182.

[14]Adolph Schock, In Quest of Free Land (San Jose: San Jose State College, 1964) p. 149.

[15]Jessie Tanner, "Foreign Immigration into North Dakota," North Dakota Historical Society Collections I (1906), p. 144.

[16]Schock, In Quest of Free Land, p. 148.

[17]North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ninth Biennial Report June 1904-June 1906, p. 327.

[18]Wisheck, Along the Trails of Yesterday, p. 181.

[19]William Godfrey Bek, "Some Facts Concerning the Germans of North Dakota," The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota, Vol. V, No. 4 (July 1915), p. 334.

[20]Thomas J. Cummings, An Examination of the Lubell Thesis: A Statistical and Historical Sketch of McIntosh County, North Dakota, 1936-1940 (MA Thesis, Unpublished, University of North Dakota, 1972) p.

[21]Adolph Schock, "In Quest of Free Land." Rural Sociology, Vol. 7, No. 4, (Dec. 1942) p. 441.

RECENT DEVELOPEMENTS

A shift in German-Russian attitudes may, perhaps, have begun in the late 1930's. It certainly came about in the post World War II years. The Cumming study of McIntosh County, reported above, detected something of a change and Sherman (previously cited) found it quite clearly at the University of North Dakota in 1965. Germans had, for whatever reasons, begun to attend college in sizeable numbers.

To check the validity of these reports, the authors studied a high school located on the edge of Traill County, (Northwood) and one in German-Russian Logan County (Napoleon). The study concerned the years, 1957 to 1961. The graduating classes of those years were similar in their ethnic proportions; Northwood was slightly more than 80% Norwegian and Napoleon had the same ratio of German-Russians.

The Northwood school reports showed that 69% of the graduates in the years in question went or to "college or technical school."[1] The predominately German-Russian school at Napoleon reported that 60% of the graduates "went on to a four year college."[2] (Some of the Napoleon graduates went, in fact, to highly rated schools; two attended Harvard.) The Northwood figure contains students who went to "technical schools;" the Napoleon total is for "four year college." One could probably say that the college bound proportions were much the same for the two schools. . . perhaps the Germans exceeded the Norwegians.

Napoleon was, and is, a farming town whose population numbered 1078 in 1960. Northwood was a similar town, in a little more affluent farming area, with a total of 1195 residents. In neither town did there seem to be institutions or unique activities which were capable of unduly influencing the educational aspirations of the young people.

What is abundantly evident is that the totals show an astonishing change in German-Russian attitudes. In 1940, the University of North Dakota was said to have had only two German-Russian students in its entire enrollment of 1828 students.[3] Yet twenty years later, a German-Russian school is found sending 60% of its graduates to college. The change is dramatic, to say the least. Furthermore, an informal check of teachers who taught in other German areas found that something of the same was happening elsewhere.

To verify the data, a survey of the Napoleon graduates of 1970 was made by studying the publication of that class as it gathered for it tenth anniversary reunion in 1980. Fifty-seven had graduated in 1970 and of that number, thirty-two had gone to either a four year college or to a two year college or technical school. This represents 56% of the graduates. The proportion is still substantial.

The well known German-Russian pattern of determination, personal discipline and hard work which had previously been oriented toward life on the farm and in a small town, by the 1960's was also being directed toward college and professional level activities. The diverse paths of Norwegian and German-Russian aspirations seem to have merged in the present day.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Robert E. Sheppard, Superintendent, Northwood High School, Letter, May 11, 1981.

[2]Interview, Gilbert Hollie, Superintendent, Napoleon High School, May 1, 1981

[3]Sherman, "Assimilation in a North Dakota German-Russian Community," p. 79.

SOME GENERALIZATIONS

When seen as a whole the German-Russians in the counties and schools studied above were decidedly less interested, less supportive and less involved in the state's educational enterprises. Joseph Voeller's assessment, mentioned at the beginning of the paper, was substantially correct: "To this day (1940) the poorest schools, the lowest teacher's salaries, the most inadequate equipment, and the most irregular attendence are found in German-Russian communities."[1]

In terms of the school plant and its physical condition the German counties were slow in development and hesitant in support. During the early decades of settlement they were not generous in their teachers' salary scales (although women teachers fared better than men), they did not insist on teachers with the highest qualifications, and they were less concerned about developing such things as multi-graded, town type schools.

In the first one-third of this century, the German-Russian counties had twice the amount of adult illiteracy as the Norwegians. Less than half of the proportions of children finished grade school among the Germans as did so among the Norwegians. Perhaps only a third as many entered high school and less than that number actually graduated.

The negative contrast stops, however, in terms of attendance in the first years of grade school. By 1920, the German-Russian averages in the 7 to 13 year school enrollment category equal the Norwegian. There are clear indications that the basic skills usually acquired in elementary school were considered just as important among Germans as among Norwegians.

In general, the German-Russians viewed education beyond the basic "three Rs" as superfluous; high school, college, and in many families even the last several years of grade school, were of little value.

The absence of Germans in the ranks of school administrators or even on school boards is most evident. Perhaps the whole question of education was viewed as the province of "other people." The reverse side of the picture may also have been a coolness on the part of the educational establishment to encourage German-Russian participation.

A change, however, seemed to be taking place as the decades of North Dakota residence proceeded. Here and there, indications appeared in the basic reports, that education was seen of increasing importance. By 1960, as the Northwood-Napoleon school comparison shows, the Germans were abreast of the Norwegians in college attendance.

Nowhere in the literature reviewed, whether included in this paper or left unreported, was there any indication that the German-Russian young people were less capable of education than Norwegians. The Silva study is quite apropos. On the contrary, it seems that the matter was basically a cultural thing: the German attitude toward education was different than the Norwegian.

The Norwegian participation in North Dakota's educational life during the first few decades of the century is truly a remarkable thing. Given the fact that, in contrast to the German-Russians, many had the advantage of a few prior years of life in such states as Wisconsin and Minnesota, they seemed to have plunged into the American scene with amazing rapidity. If university enrollment and the occupancy of key positions in the educational (and even political) hierarchy is a measure, they exceeded other large ethnic groups by far. It must be remembered that other immigrant peoples, too, had lived for a short while in eastern states but were absent from the school leadership scene. The name analysis of school officials and college

graduates showed Norwegians standing shoulder to shoulder with residents of early American and British Isles background. The literacy rate and the proportion of young people attending high school in the Norwegian counties compares favorably with and often exceeds that of counties with a high Anglo-American population. Apparently, many Norwegians agreed with the sentiments of Paul Hjelm Hansen, the Norwegian journalist whose praise of the Red River Valley brought many settlers to North Dakota. In 1869, Hansen said:

> I believe that it is the sacred duty of the emigrants who wish to make this country their future home. . . to become united and assimilated with the native population of the country, the Americans, to learn the English language and to familiarize themselves with and uphold the spirit and institutions of the Republic. The sooner this comes about, the better.[2]

The source of the variance in the two groups' attitudes, in the authors' opinion, is to be found in their prior experience both in Russia and in Norway. On one hand, the Germans were an isolated and threatened group, little effected by the "modern" events of contemporary Germany or Russia. They were a rural minded folk society trying to survive under difficult circumstances. Norway, however, was a whirl of movements. Nationalism, pietism, secularism and grass root romanticism was part of the scene. There was a thirst for learning, social advancement and personal achievement which was unique. The Norwegian immigrants to America apparently saw the North Dakota school as a needed and apt vehicle to success in their strivings.

Finally, by the 1960's, the achievements of the two groups begin to converge. When the possibility of life on the land became a less possible and less attractive option, the German-Russians began to see high school, college and technical school attendence as a necessary part of a successful life.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Joseph B. Voeller, "The Origins of the German-Russian People and Their Role in North Dakota" (Unpublished M.S. thesis, University of North Dakota, 1940), p. 36.

[2]Theodore C. Blegen, Ed., Land of Their Choice: the Immigrants Write Home (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 446.

TABLE I

U.S. Census 1910

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill		Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan
Total Foreign Born	1843	2935	1985	3632	Total Foreign Born	2364	2638	1735	3104
Total Foreign Born Norwegian	1154	1886	1310	2854	Total Foreign Born Russia and Rumania*	1811	2479	1404	2499
Percent Norwegian Foreign Born	63%	64%	66%	79%	Percent German-Russian Foreign Born	77%	94%	81%	81%

*Rumania signifies Bessarabia

U.S. Census 1920

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill		Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan
Total Foreign Born	2290	2230	1369	2649	Total Foreign Born	2269	2337	2239	2284
Total Foreign Born Norwegian	1318	1489	921	2077	Total Foreign Born Russia and Rumania*	1772	2189	1794	1862
Percent Norwegian Foreign Born	58%	67%	67%	78%	Percent German-Russian Foreign Born	78%	93%	80%	82%

*Rumania signifies Bessarabia

Rural Households 1965 W.C. Sherman

	Divide	Nelson	Steele	Traill		Logan	McIntosh	Mercer	Sheridan
Total Households	619	843	701	1025	Total Households	696	678	565	690
Norwegian Households	449	550	518	715	German-Russian Households	616	655	456	556
Percent Norwegian	73%	65%	74%	70%	Percent German-Russian	88%	97%	71%	81%

U.S. Census

	Value of all Farm Property		County Population		
	1910	1920	1910	1920	1930
Divide	$5,647,007	25,117,517	6015	9637	9626
Nelson	21,841, 555	37,223,242	10140	10362	10203
Steele	20,758,421	34,462,903	7616	7401	6972
Traill	28,886,708	46,457,967	12545	12210	12600
Logan	9,993,823	19,784,319	6168	7723	8089
McIntosh	11,775,792	22,470,283	7251	9010	9621
Mercer	7,398,696	18,090,166	4747	8224	9516
Sheridan	13,104,617	17,993,100	8103	7935	7373

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